

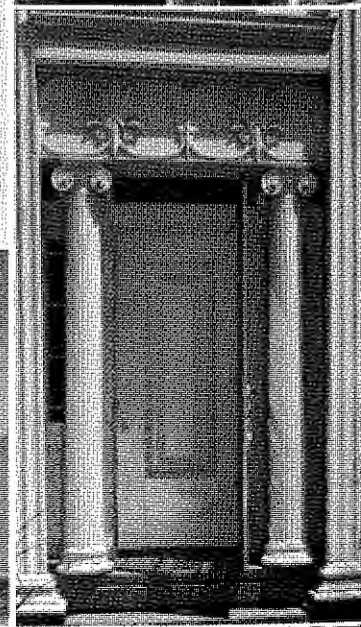
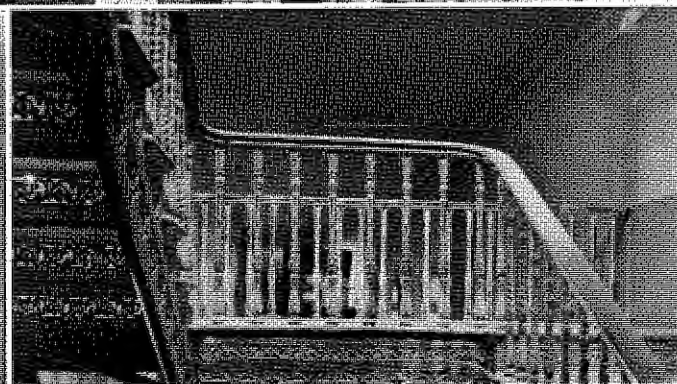
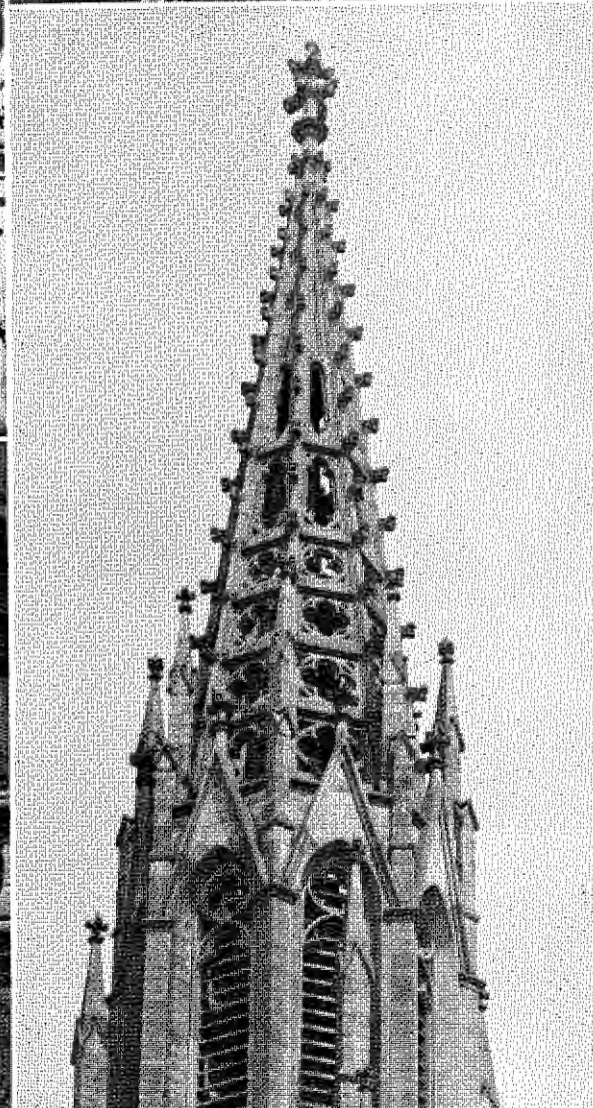
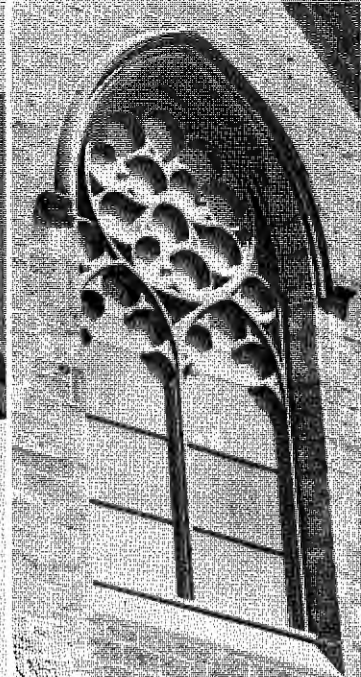
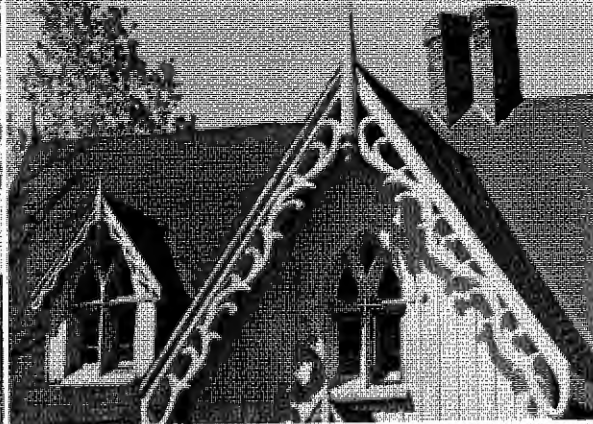
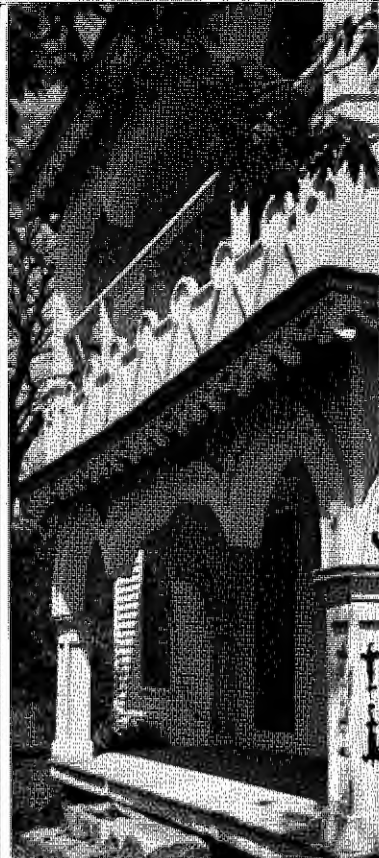


The Historic American Buildings Survey in Western New York

EXHIBIT CATALOG

by Olaf William Shelgren, Jr.

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INTRODUCTION

The Historic American Buildings Survey was fathered by the Great Depression in late 1933 with the intent of providing work for unemployed architects. The idea was to record in photographs, by measured drawings, and in written descriptions the history of the nation's architecture. A thousand men's efforts were spent over a seven-year period in recording buildings of the eastern seaboard built before 1825. At the end of this period (1941) 6,389 structures had been recorded and the resulting data deposited in the Library of Congress. World War II and subsequent disturbances put the program into a state of suspended animation.

In 1957 the Survey was re-activated. By this time there was an awareness among historians that the entire 19th century had architectural value and that the United States was larger than the tidewater area of the Atlantic seaboard. 1916 was then set as the cut-off date for buildings to be added to the Survey. Chairmen of Preservation Committees of local chapters of the American Institute of Architects across the country were approached regarding the suitability of buildings in their areas for inclusion in the Survey.

Mr. Olaf William Shelgren is chairman of the Preservation Committee of the Buffalo & Western New York Chapter of the A.I.A. His initial reply to the HABS office, then in Philadelphia, resulted in a visit to Buffalo in 1963 on a summer's afternoon by John Poppeliers, architectural historian on their staff. Mr. Poppeliers, a native of Binghamton, N. Y., was assumed by his superiors to be a knowledgeable person on Western New York and the buildings existing here. It was his first visit and his knowledge was limited to Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Company office building and his houses—gained from books and classroom. The short length of his visit permitted only a whirlwind tour of

downtown Buffalo and a newspaper interview, but gave him first-hand knowledge of buildings existing here.

August 1964 brought Mr. Poppeliers back to the Niagara Frontier, for a week-end visit this time. Arriving on a Friday afternoon, he had time for a brief review of the downtown Buffalo area. Saturday brought forth an excursion of Mr. Shelgren and Mr. Poppeliers to Chautauqua County with Miss Jewel Conover of Fredonia as tour leader and Mr. Harold L. Olmsted as obligato. Miss Conover lead the band of travelers through Fredonia, Westfield, Ashville, Panama, and finally to Chautauqua. Here Mr. Robert Gaede, of Cleveland and then national chairman of the A.I.A. Preservation Committees, took over as leader, being a long-time summer resident of the Chautauqua community. Mr. Olmsted, in wooden shoes and long white hair, posed successfully as Ringo Starr's grandfather for a bevy of adoring teen-agers until he shattered the illusion. Sunday, Mr. Charles Thiele, architect of Niagara Falls, and Mr. Lester Smith acted as tour guides for the Upper Niagara River: Niagara Falls, Lewiston, and Youngstown, before Mr. Poppeliers returned in the evening to Philadelphia.

In September Mr. James C. Massey, head of HABS, wrote Mr. Shelgren from Philadelphia to say that the Survey would include, initially, eleven buildings in Buffalo, five in the Niagara Falls area, four in Chautauqua County, and six in the Albion area (visited by Poppeliers independently from his Buffalo visits). This was to be in charge of Mr. Shelgren and the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society, who were to be responsible for the written architectural and historical data along with the other members of Mr. Shelgren's committee — Messrs. Louis Greenstein, Guy Baldwin, and Roger Patterson. Miss Conover and Mr. Shelgren, Jr. did this work for the Chautauqua County Buildings, as did

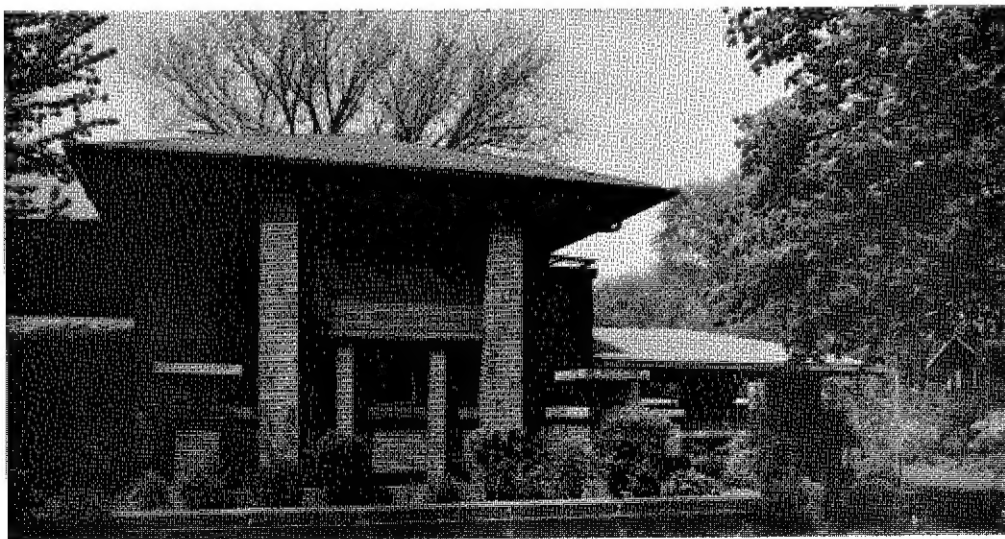
Mr. Cary Lattin, Orleans County Historian, for the Albion buildings.

It was June, 1965 when Mr. Jack Boucher, HABS photographer, appeared with a station wagon full of equipment to do the photographing. He arrived in Buffalo and within an hour was at work. The weather during his five-day visit cooperated splendidly and the results were approximately 150 superb photographs. Subsequently, the written material and photograph negatives were sent to Philadelphia and then to the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C.

The criteria for a building's inclusion are its historical and/or architectural merits. Priority is given to buildings threatened with demolition (i.e. urban renewal and highway programs) or alterations. The annual reports of the Librarian of Congress show that the HABS is one of the most active collections in the Library. Copies of photographs of the buildings and the written descriptions are available from the Library of Congress for a nominal sum.

The HABS program is a continuing one. Unfortunately its funds are limited and the published catalog of the Survey (available in libraries across the country) has not been brought up to date for ten years. There is no reason why local organizations cannot add to the collection on their own initiative. All that is required for this is an evaluation of buildings — architecturally and historically, and a good photographer. In this way many persons can contribute to the documentation of an important part of our cultural heritage.

The following catalog was prepared by the author for the initial exhibit of these materials in the State Court of the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society. Funds for the mounting of the exhibit and its formal opening on February 16, 1966, were provided by the New York State Council on the Arts. A further grant from the Council made possible the conversion of the exhibit into a traveling exhibit, and the publication of this catalog.



MARTIN-TAURIELLO HOUSE

MARTIN-TAURIELLO HOUSE
123 JEWETT PARKWAY
BUFFALO, N.Y.

Now owned by Mrs. S. J. Tauriello, it was built in 1904 for Darwin Martin, an

executive of the Larkin Co. It is perhaps superfluous to note that Frank Lloyd Wright was the architect. Originally, it had a conservatory and garage connected to the house by a long pergola-like struc-

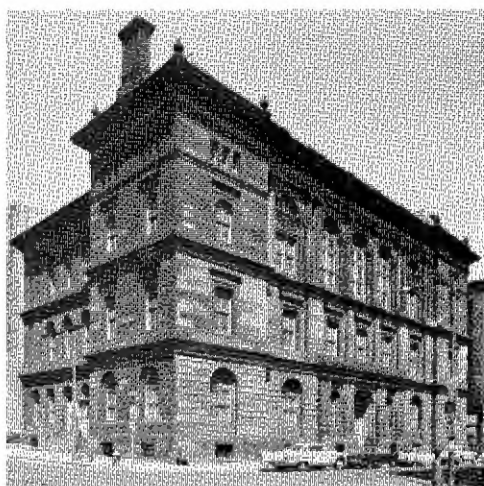
ture. These were demolished in 1960 when the rear of the property was sold. The present owner acquired the property in the 1950's after a long period of inoccupancy. They have carefully remodeled the house, respecting the original design, into two apartments plus living and working quarters for themselves.

Because of the fame of the architect, scarcely a week goes by without a re-

quest to visit the house by architects and students from all over the world.

UNITED STATES CUSTOMS HOUSE
NE CORNER SENECA AND
WASHINGTON STREET
BUFFALO, N.Y.

Demolished in 1965, the earliest part of this building was completed in 1858 (the 3-story rear portion). In 1886 the 4-story front portion was built. Originally it housed post office, customs office, and court rooms. The Ohio sandstone of the exterior surrendered its original tawny warmth to the soot of the years which gave the building an excessively formidable appearance. The design of the building had its origins in Italy. One had, when standing on the street outside, a feeling of Florence where the palazzi of Renaissance bankers hang heavy on the streets.



UNITED STATES CUSTOMS HOUSE

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL
SHELTON SQUARE
BUFFALO, N.Y.

Construction was started in 1849 with Richard Upjohn as architect. He also designed Trinity Church in New York City's financial district. It is built with



ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

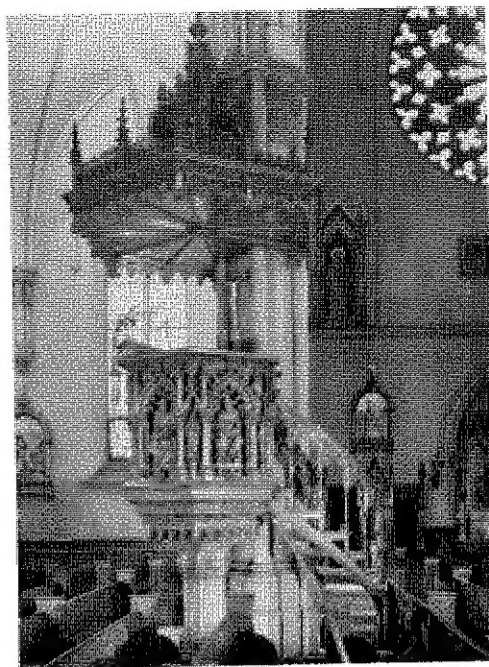
sandstone quarried at Hulberton in Orleans County. In 1888 fire consumed the entire interior and the wood roof. Reconstruction within the masonry shell was started almost immediately. The building is a superb example of Gothic revival architecture owing its inspiration to the early churches of England. Standing on a small irregularly shaped lot, it presents a continually changing composition to the pedestrian who circumnavigates it.

ST. LOUIS ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
MAIN AND EDWARD STREETS
BUFFALO, N.Y.

Herein, there lies a small paradox: a French patron saint and a building owing its inspiration to the Gothic of Germany. This is eminently suitable considering the growth of Buffalo and of St. Louis' parish: the French background of Mr. Le Couteulx, donor in 1829 of the land, and the large German influx in the mid-19th century. This building for St. Louis Church was completed in 1889, Messrs. Schickel and Ditmars of New York City being the architects. The exterior is Medina red sandstone and the tower is a delight to the eye from many points in the area, near and far.

DORSHEIMER HOUSE
(GEO. R. BENNETT CO.)
434 DELAWARE AVENUE
BUFFALO, N.Y.

Mr. William Dorsheimer built this dignified building for his residence in 1869 from drawings prepared by H. H. Richardson, architect, who later designed Trinity Church in Boston, Massachusetts, and the Buffalo State Hospital. The house is more representative of designs of the 1860's and 70's, when the style of the French Second Empire was popular, than of Mr. Richardson's later designs to which he owes his great reputation. The careful transformation from residence to business quarters maintains evidence of the vanishing glories of Delaware Avenue.



ST. LOUIS CHURCH



DORSHEIMER HOUSE

PRUDENTIAL BUILDING
SW CORNER CHURCH AND PEARL STREETS
BUFFALO, N.Y.

Architecturally, this is probably the most famous building in Buffalo, having a world-wide reputation. It was designed by Louis Sullivan and built in 1895, being one of Buffalo's first all-steel frame



PRUDENTIAL BUILDING

UNIVERSITY CLUB
355 BUFFALO STREET
NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y.

Started in 1837, but for unknown reasons not completed until 1851 by Major Solon Whitney, this Greek Revival residence sits discreetly removed from the street. The native grey limestone of the walls acts as pleasant foil for the white woodwork of the exterior. Subsequent additions and alterations through the years show the changes of fashion, but yet have the proud spirit of the original house.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
505 CAYUGA AT 5TH STREET
LEWISTON, N.Y.

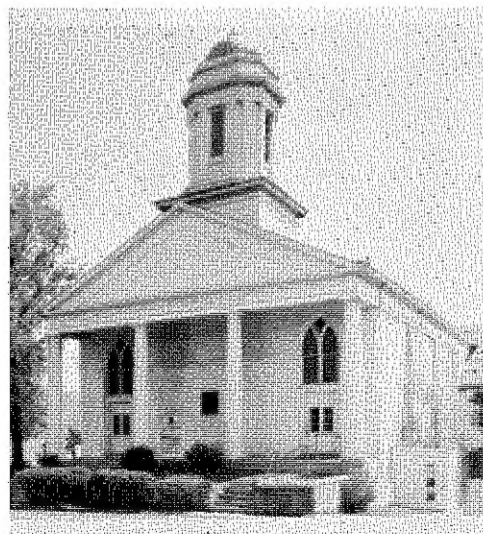
For almost 150 years the cupola of this building has been a landmark for travelers descending the Niagara Escarpment. The building was started in 1825 and architecturally is a transitional design between the Post-Colonial or Federal style and the Greek Revival. Continuous use of the building as a house of worship has brought changes to the exterior and interior to keep it in style. Fortunately, the cupola and two-story portico have remained unchanged.

buildings. Sullivan covered the steel frame on the exterior with terra cotta in designs which are one of his "trade marks." These are carefully confined within the vertical lines of the exterior except at the cornice where there is a gentle explosion.

The interior of the building is currently undergoing modernization and pieces of the original metalwork are being utilized for decorative ornaments. Yale University and the Art Institute of Chicago are among the proud owners of salvaged materials from the interior, and in a sense all Buffalonians are owners of the exterior.



UNIVERSITY CLUB



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**ERIE COUNTY SAVING BANK
MAIN AND NIAGARA STREETS
BUFFALO, N.Y.**

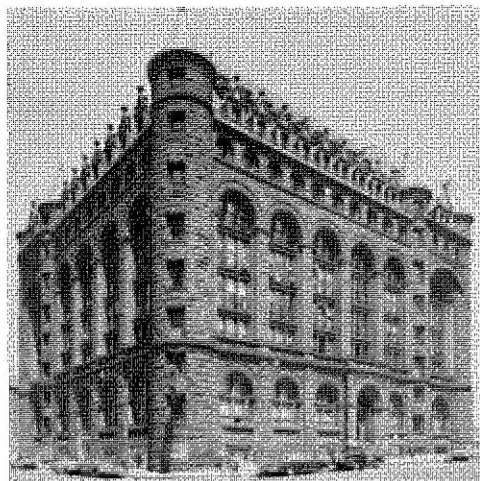
Completed in 1893, this building represents a transitional stage of construction. Its neighbor, St. Paul's Cathedral, represents the early stage with the masonry walls supporting floor and roof. Its other neighbor, the Prudential Building, represents the latest stage with masonry covering a steel frame which supports floor and roof. The Erie County Savings Bank Building has the masonry to carry floor and roof at the exterior, while inside these are carried on a steel frame.

Occupying a triangular lot, the building represents a superb solution to the difficult site. George B. Post of New York City was selected as the architect in 1891, the result of a competition. It was initially designed to have electric lighting — a modern invention in 1893 — for which Thomas Alva Edison was the consulting engineer. The design of the building owes much to the chateaux of France and the roofline is the most interesting in downtown Buffalo.

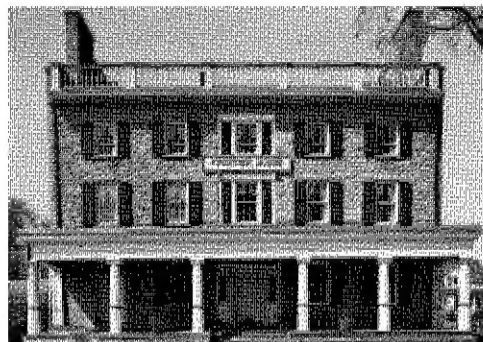
This building, along with its neighbors, St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral and the Prudential Building, constitute a triumvirate of architectural history. The building is to be demolished in the "interest" of urban renewal.

**THE FRONTIER HOUSE
450 CENTER STREET
LEWISTON, N.Y.**

In 1833 a traveler through Lewiston reported that the Frontier House was a very good building and that the rest of the buildings there were very ordinary. Since few existing Lewiston buildings predate 1833, we cannot confirm or refute this traveler's judgment. But looking at the Frontier House by itself, we can agree with his verdict on it. It was built in 1824 as a hotel and has been serving the public ever since. Of particular interest is the original ornamental woodwork of the interior and exterior.



ERIE COUNTY SAVINGS BANK



THE FRONTIER HOUSE

**THE COBBLESTONE CHURCH
RIDGE ROAD (U.S. 104) NORTH SIDE
CHILDS, N.Y.**

In 1834 the First Universalist Society erected a simple stone church building on the Ridge Road. Since the area abounded with small stones, the size and shape of large potatoes, the exterior was faced with these laid in straight rows. This we now call "cobblestone building." In 1874 the interior of the church was remodeled. The pews were turned around; a new "modern" pulpit was installed; the doors from the pews were removed; and the old woodwork was grained. In the 1890's the tower was removed because of the ravages of time and the weather, and the congregation moved to neighboring Albion.

Finally, in 1960 the Cobblestone Society was formed to save the church

building which was in danger of being sold for commercial purposes. It became the property of the Cobblestone Society in 1963, and since then the tower has been replaced, roof repaired, windows reglazed, and fallen plaster replaced. The Society is in the process of turning the basement into a museum room for presenting the history of cobblestone building and of the Albion-Childs area.

SMITH BLY-FANCHER HOUSE
4 N. MAPLE STREET
ASHVILLE, N.Y.

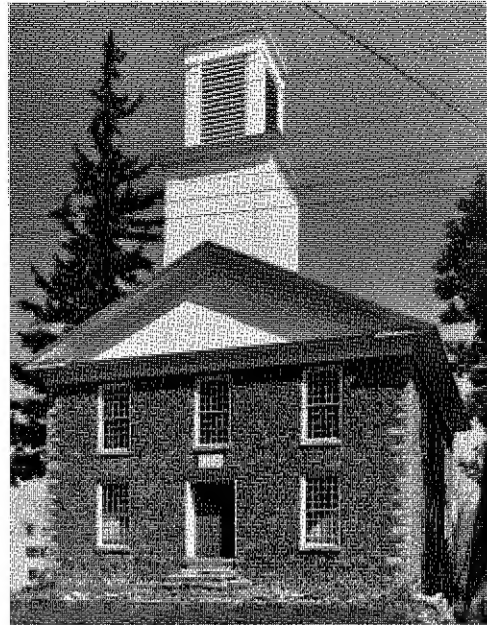
In or about 1835 a Mr. Smith Bly built this Greek Revival house for his residence in the village of Ashville in the town of North Harmony. And a harmonious residence he did build. The ornamental woodwork is reputed to have come from Philadelphia, but no proof of this has been found. Regardless of its origin it has survived the weather and changing tastes splendidly, and still delights the eye of the beholder.

BLOTT-BARTLETT HOUSE
135 W. BANK STREET
ALBION, N.Y.

This is a small temple-form frame house on a side street. Its grace and dignity come from the four simple square columns across the front and the elaborate ornament of the entrance and adjoining window heads. This apparently came from Minard Lafever's *The Beauties of Modern Architecture*, a builder's handbook first published in 1835 and widely used for about twenty years.

ATHERLY-SWANSON HOUSE
406 W. MAIN STREET
ASHVILLE, N.Y.

Perhaps this house can be regarded as a triumph of the jigsaw, for it has an almost bewildering variety of sawed ornament. The house is essentially a square Italianate villa surmounted with an observatory, and typical of the mid-19th century. But the two-story porches



THE COBBLESTONE CHURCH



SMITH BLY-FANCHER HOUSE



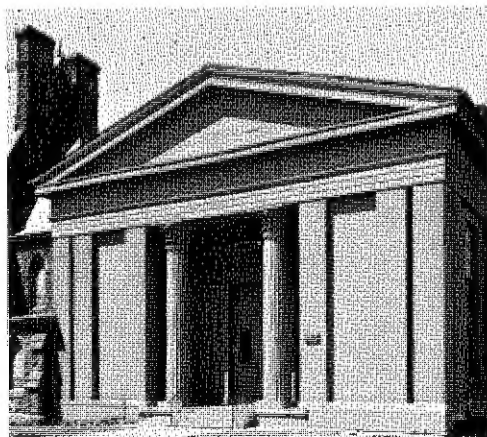
BLOTT-BARTLETT HOUSE



ATHERLY-SWANSON HOUSE



COPP-SMITH HOUSE



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

at front and back, the side porch, and the ornamentation render the building unique. The ornament is basically Gothic but was translated in the hands of a country carpenter into something exotic.

COPP-SMITH HOUSE
17 EAST AVENUE
SINCLAIRVILLE, N.Y.

"The Rural Gothic style, characterized mainly by pointed gables . . . (is) much the most beautiful mode for our country residences. The outline is highly picturesque and harmonious with nature. The form is convenient, their accessories elegant and they are highly expressive of the refined and unostentatious enjoyments of the country." These words were written by Andrew Jackson Downing in a book titled *Cottage Residences; or, A series of designs for rural cottages and cottage villas. And their gardens and grounds. Adapted to North America*, first appearing in 1842.

The exact date of the construction is unknown, but it was probably around 1850, and the builder heeded Mr. Downing's words. The house is fortunate in retaining most of its ornamentation. Especially unusual are the two diamond stacks of the chimney, and the rose trellis. The interior of the house is trimmed in the Greek Revival style. The years and successive owners have been kind to the house.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
EAST STATE STREET OPPOSITE COURTHOUSE
ALBION, N.Y.

Originally, this building had a projecting tower which was later demolished by the destructive hand of nature and changing tastes in style. When the stone church in the late 19th century Gothic style was built adjoining this Greek Revival building, the original room for worship was converted to other uses of the church. Fortunately, the splendid plaster ceiling ornament remains, along with the two columns flanking the entrance.

DR. WALTER CARY HOUSE
184 DELAWARE AVENUE
BUFFALO, N.Y.

This house was built in 1853, and to build a house in the Early English style then (Gothic Revival is a fairly recent term) was to announce that one was a pace-setter in matters of style and fashion. But by the end of the Civil War it was rather out-of-date. So in the early 1870's the mansard roof was added and the interiors remodeled in French Renaissance style, which brought it abreast with current tastes. Its destruction this year has been a great loss to Delaware Avenue and to Buffalo.



CARY HOUSE

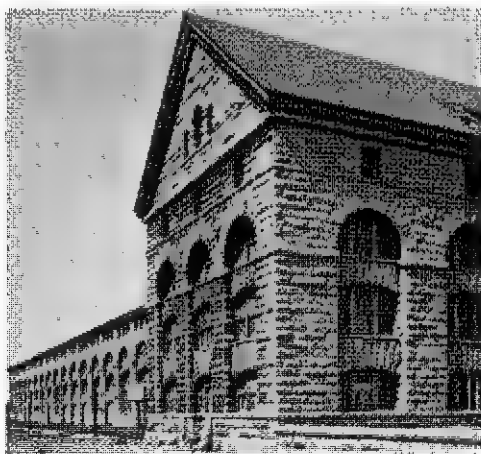
U. S. POST OFFICE
SWAN AND ELLICOTT STREETS
BUFFALO, N.Y.

Nowadays post office buildings are not built as they used to be. Construction on this one was started in 1894 and finished in early 1901; James Knox Taylor was the architect. The style is French Gothic, complete with gargoyles on the tower and at the corners. A native note is the Federal eagle over the entrance and the bison heads at each side. The great skylight-covered court in the center of the building above the first floor is really quite breathtaking. This building is to be declared surplus property later this year



U. S. POST OFFICE, BUFFALO

by the government, so we can probably look forward to another parking lot.



ADAMS POWER PLANT

ADAMS POWER PLANT
BUFFALO AVENUE ADJACENT TO END OF
PORTAGE ROAD
NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y.

This building was in the process of demolition in the spring of 1965 when

the HABS photographer arrived to take pictures. Completed in 1895 with Stanford White as the architect, this building housed the first generating plant to transmit electrical current over a long distance (to Buffalo for street lighting). Built of Niagara limestone, in great rock-faced blocks, its very appearance said "POWER." The masonry of the main entrance was carefully saved and it is planned to re-erect this as a sort of "triumphal arch" memorial elsewhere in Niagara Falls.

RYND-POLETTI HOUSE
NW CORNER OF WASHINGTON
& PEARL STREETS
WESTFIELD, N.Y.

Along with the gothic cottage, Mr. Andrew Jackson Downing advocated the Italian villa as a proper style for the American house. Great overhanging eaves supported on scrolled brackets, and usually an observatory surmounting the low pitched roof are the trademarks of this style. This house was apparently built at the close of the Civil War. The boards of the siding were fashioned to imitate cut stone (like Mt. Vernon) and then given a coat of sand and paint to further the likeness. Horizontally sliding sash in the windows in the frieze are a rare feature. Since a fire in the rear wing in 1964, the house has been empty awaiting destruction by vandals and/or the elements.



RYND-POLETTI HOUSE



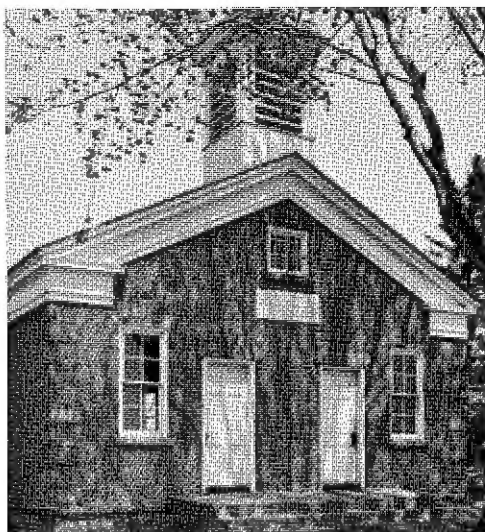
BUFFALO STATE HOSPITAL

BUFFALO STATE HOSPITAL
400 FOREST AVENUE
BUFFALO, N.Y.

The construction of the original complex of buildings (22) spanned the years 1871 to 1890, with Henry Hobson Richardson as architect. The assemblage of French medieval forms in this vast composition is now considered typical of his work. Collaborating with the architect was Frederick Law Olmsted who was responsible for the landscape design of the grounds. The twin towers add a vital vertical note to the flat surrounding landscape and a landmark to the skyline of the West Side.

COBBLESTONE SCHOOL
RIDGE ROAD (U.S. 104) N. SIDE
¼ MI. E. OF INTERSECTION WITH
N. Y. STATE ROUTE 98
CHILDS, N.Y.

Built in 1849, this building served the children of the area until the mid 1950's. The building was acquired in 1961 by the Cobblestone Society which maintains it as a 19th century school museum.



COBBLESTONE SCHOOL



THE D. A. R. (TOUSLEY-CHURCH) HOUSE



PRATT OPERA

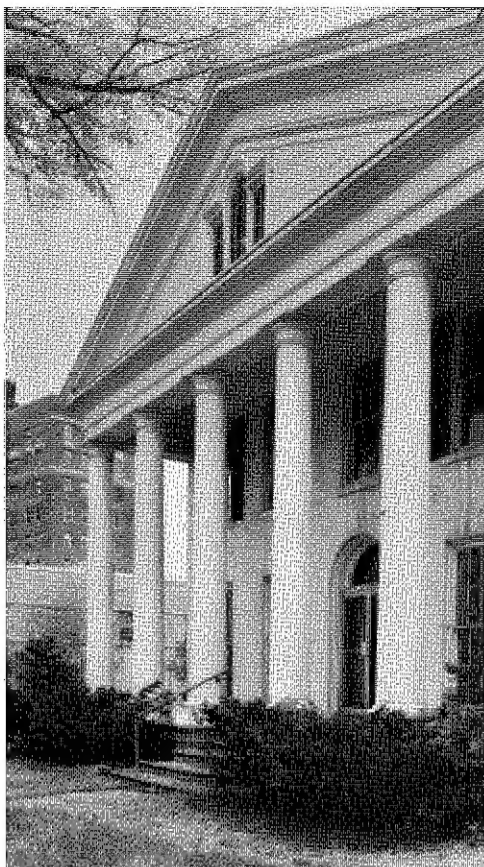
Cobblestone buildings (as they are now called) were built in surprising numbers in Upstate New York from 1825 to 1865. Westward-moving Yorkers took this craft, where nature cooperated with a supply of stones, into Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Canada. The stones of this Greek Revival-style school are the smooth water-washed variety laid in courses approximately 2-¼ in. high. Here the unusual feature is that the stones are a veneer on a wood frame building.

THE D. A. R. (TOUSLEY-CHURCH) HOUSE
249 N. MAIN STREET
ALBION, N.Y.

A unique Greek Revival house, with as much distinction as the great temple form houses of Geneva and Rochester, this small house has undergone few changes since it was built around 1840. On the exterior the second floor is minimized by the deep cornice and flat pitched roof. But, greeting the visitor on entering the main entrance, is a most imposing and unusual staircase. Elsewhere on the first floor ornament from Minard Lafever's architectural books is in evidence.

PRATT OPERA
114-120 MAIN STREET
ALBION, N.Y.

Built by John Pratt in the late 1880's its original name was the "Grand Opera" in the Pratt block. At the time of its construction it had the largest stage between Rochester and Buffalo. The 1900's saw the decline of traveling stage shows, so the theater appointments of the interior were removed and the auditorium used for gymnasium purposes. Above the ground floor the building has kept its splendid facade with the corbeled cornice and projecting pedimented central feature. These are echoed in adjacent buildings which collectively form fine examples of late 19th century commercial architecture that has not been seriously mistreated by would-be modernizers.



THE WILCOX HOUSE

THE WILCOX HOUSE
641 DELAWARE AVENUE
BUFFALO, N.Y.

Every community in Western New York should have a temple form house as a reminder of its earlier days, and here is one of national historical significance. The structure has a tangled building history which has not yet been completely unraveled. The Delaware Avenue end of the house started life in 1838 as part of the officers quarters of the Poinsett Barracks, which then occupied the area bounded by Delaware Avenue, Main, North, and Allen Streets. After this United States Army post was given up in 1845, this part of the barracks became a private residence with some alterations.

In the 1880's Ansley Wilcox acquired the property and in the mid-1890's he engaged George Cary as architect and proceeded to double the size of the original building with the addition of the rear half of the house. As Mr. Wilcox was a person of national consequence in civic affairs, it was only proper that Theodore Roosevelt should be sworn into the Presidency here, following the death of William McKinley on September 14, 1901.

KREMLIN HALL
WEST EAGLE AND PEARL STREETS
BUFFALO, N.Y.

Demolished in 1965, Kremlin Hall was built in 1854-55 by the Young Men's Christian Union to house stores, offices, and on the top floor a public hall seating 900 people. A fire in 1875 reduced the building to a brick shell within which were rebuilt stores and offices. It derived its dignity from the simple, regularly-spaced windows of ample size and capped with flat pedimental cast iron lintels. A cornice of classical origin with a paneled frieze topped the walls. It perhaps epitomized that simple, anonymous architecture admired by the late architect, Eliel Saarinen, for giving to an area a sense of history and character while acting as a foil for more important neighboring buildings.



KREMLIN HALL

BUFFALO LIGHTHOUSE OF 1833
COAST GUARD BASE, BUFFALO HARBOR

Built in 1833 and deactivated for many years, the Buffalo Lighthouse was transferred to the custody of the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society in 1961, the happy culmination of a sustained campaign for its preservation. Its demolition had been proposed in plans to improve the north entrance of the harbor. The structure is a superb piece of masonry. For an account of its restoration, with a listing of the Committee whose efforts preserved it and of the major individual and corporate donors whose contributions restored it, see *Niagara Frontier*, volume 8, pages 114-117 (winter 1962).



BUFFALO LIGHTHOUSE OF 1833

occupied this building until 1908, when it was vacated. During World War I it served as a button factory and then stood vacant until fire gutted the structure in 1924. The subsequent rebuilding for Customs offices once again lowered the roof which reduced the third floor windows to slots huddled under the eaves. But the original round-headed openings were preserved on the first and second floors in the old local stone walls. Despite the 1924 Georgian detail at the windows and main entrance, the building still has the Italianate feeling of a typical Civil War building.



U. S. CUSTOMS HOUSE

U. S. CUSTOMS HOUSE
WHIRLPOOL STREET AT
LOWER SOCH STREET
NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y.

The men of the Niagara District of U. S. Customs work in a building, originally built in 1863, which stands beside the American end of the Lower Arch Bridge to Canada. Customs men

The publication of this catalog was made possible by a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Front cover: The Prudential Building, Buffalo, New York.

Inside front cover: left to right — Atherly-Swanson House, Ashville, N. Y.; Copp-Smith House, Sinclairville, N. Y.; St. Paul's Cathedral, Buffalo, N. Y.; Erie County Savings Bank, Buffalo, N. Y.; St. Louis Church, Buffalo, N. Y.; U. S. Customs House, Buffalo, N. Y. — two views; Smith Bly-Fancher House, Ashville, N. Y.

Rear cover: The Cobblestone Church, Childs, New York.

All Photographs by Mr. Jack Boucher, HABS photographer.

